R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 015 742 JC 670 931

PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JUNIOR COLLEGE.

BY- GREER, THOMAS V.
GEORGE PEABODY COLL. FOR TEACHERS, NASHVILLE, TENN.

PUB DATE NOV 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.28 5P.

DESCRIPTORS- *JUNIOR COLLEGES, *COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT, *COLLEGE ROLE, STUDENT OPINION, *ROLE PERCEPTION, INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT, SENIORS, TRANSFER STUDENTS,

A SAMPLE OF 60 SENIORS IN A UNIVERSITY'S COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION INDICATED THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE JUNIOR COLLEGE AS AN INSTITUTION BY THE USE OF A 7-POINT RATING SCALE INVOLVING TEN DIMENSIONS--(1) USEFUL-USELESS, (2) DOMINEERING-LAX, (3) MOTIVATED-AIMLESS, (4) TIMELY-UNTIMELY, (5) POTENT-IMPOTENT, (6) DIFFICULT-EASY, (7) INFLUENTIAL-UNINFLUENTIAL, (8) VIGOROUS-FEEBLE, (9) MOVING-STILL, AND (10) IMPORTANT-UNIMPORTANT. ON ITEMS 3,4,5,9, AND 10 THE 20 SUBJECTS WHO HAD ATTENDED JUNIOR COLLEGES RANKED THE JUNIOR COLLEGE HIGHER (TOWARD THE LEFT-HAND TERM OF EACH PAIR) THAN DID THOSE WHO HAD NOT ATTENDED JUNIOR COLLEGE. THE REVERSE WAS TRUE FOR THE OTHER FIVE ITEMS. IN 9 ITEMS, THE FORMER JUNIOR COLLEGE STUDENTS SHOWED GREATER VARIANCE IN THEIR RESPONSES. SUCH VARIATION MAY BE THE RESULT OF THEIR EXPERIENCES AT AND RECOLLECTIONS OF SPECIFIC INSTITUTIONS. VARIATIONS AMONG COLLEGES MAY BE THE RESULT OF THEIR IDENTIFICATION WITH ONE OR MORE SEGMENTS OF ADULT EDUCATION, SECONDARY EDUCATION, AND HIGHER EDUCATION, AS WELL AS OF THEIR NEED FOR IDENTIFICATION WITH THEIR SPECIFIC COMMUNITIES RATHER THAN WITH A STEREOTYPE. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN "PEABODY JOURNAL OF EDUCATION," VOLUME 44, NUMBER 3, NOVEMBER, 1966. (WO)

ERIC ED015742

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Perceived Characteristics of the Junior College

THOMAS V. GREER
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge

One of the most widely discussed educational topics today is the junior college. A rather large segment of the population appears to be interested in what the institution is, what it does, what characteristics it exhibits, and the intensity levels of some of those characteristics. Certainly there is a keen, inquiring interest among all educators regarding these points (1).

The junior college offers curricula that appeal to several types of students, including those who are continuing to update or acquire occupational skills, those who plan to go to work immediately after junior college, and those who plan to go on to a university or four-year college. This paper deals primarily with the last named type.

In an attempt to throw some light on the perceived characteristics of the junior college, the author conducted a small-scale inquiry among the senior class in the college of business administration of The University of Texas. He used the semantic differential, which was developed several years ago by a group of University of Illinois psychologists, on a sample of 60 persons from that class. Twenty of these seniors had attended a junior college and forty had not. There were thirteen different junior colleges in the backgrounds of these students.

Ten bi-polar adjectival scales were used to measure some of the aspects that were thought to be interesting. As recommended by the developers of the technique, seven spaces on the scale were provided the respondents. An example showing the value of each space is the following:

Junior College

	Extremely	Very	Slightly	About equally both	Slightly	Very	Extremely	
Vigorous	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Feeble

Mean averages and standard deviations were computed for each of the two groups of seniors and are presented in the accompanying table.

Survey Findings and Discussion

The patterns in the data should prove provocative to people seriously concerned with the junior college as a living, functioning institution. The students who had attended such an institution rated the concept "junior college" higher than did the students

In: Peabody Journal of Education, 44(3)/145-148, November, 1966.

JC 670 931

who had not attended on five of the ten bi-polar scales: motivated-aimless, timely-untimely, potent-impotent, moving-still, important-unimportant. The reverse was true on the following scales: unless, domineering-lax, difficult-easy, influential-uninfluential, vigorous-feeble.

The two groups assigned the four lowest scores to the same four scales in exactly the same order. In other words, the two groups were in close agreement with each other on the characteristics which they regard the junior college as poor in (given the limited number of adjective pairs, 10, available to the respondents). The worst score was on difficult-easy, followed in order by domineering-lax, vigorous-feeble, and influential-uninfluential. Of course the interpretation of the scale domineering-lax is particularly unclear.

An intriguing finding was that there was far more disagreement on ratings within the group of seniors who had attended a junior college than among those who had not. This is reflected in the standard deviation data presented in the table. The sole exception was on the scale potent-impotent, in which the amount of internal scatter of attitudes was almost identical in the two groups. The greatest difference between groups in amounts of internal disagreement was on the vigorous-feeble scale. This scale also showed the greatest instance of disagreement in the entire study. That was among the students who had attended a junior college.

Based on these data, one may reasonably infer that the junior college as an institution measured by these ten adjectival scales was not stereotyped in the perceptions of the respondents. Instead, there was a considerable scatter in views, particularly among those who had attended a junior college.

Of course this study does not furnish the rationale for the attitudes expressed by the 60 seniors. However, it should be noted in connection with the most critical views toward the junior college that these students were completing at least their second year in a rather special environment. That environment included several measurable factors for which the students undoubtedly had some fairly accurate approximations. The students' awareness that their university had a faculty in which most members held the doctorate, that many faculty members in the school of business administration were business consultants, and that most were engaged in research and writing very possibly caused them to view the junior college somewhat harshly. After all, given present philosophies of junior college administration, these are some of the very points on which junior colleges would be expected to score low. The respondents were not asked to make a contrast between junior colleges and their university, but their frame of reference was such as to encourage using their university as a sort of bench mark.

No one can say with any assurance why the seniors who had attended a junior college were so far from general agreement. However, one can conjecture that the students' perceptions of the concept "junior college" were massively influenced by the

recollections of the specific junior college attended and that the thirteen junior colleges they had attended were in fact quite different on the aspects examined. This type of institution does have a great variety of academic standards, faculty competence, and physical facilities from school to school. Administrative policies on research, writing, and consulting also vary considerably. Perhaps the respondents recorded "true" differences among the schools attended.

However, to be fair, one must say these great variations also occur among four-year colleges. It is suggested, then, that the explanation may lie in the fact that junior colleges have identified with three different entities in education—secondary education, higher education, and adult education. At times they have identified with only one, at times with two, and at other times with all three. Leaving aside the question of whether junior college goals should include one, two, or all three orientations, one can argue that students are confused by this blurred image of the junior college movement. And probably the general public is just as confused. The educator has begun to take note of the anxiety business management feels when it determines that a product brand or line of products carries a blurred image and the usually careful direction of activities thereafter by that management to build toward some new image goal. It is not suggested that all junior colleges should or can band together and collectively build an image as easily as a marketing vice-president can do so for a product. Nevertheless, there is some food for thought here.

As long as the junior colleges have as their objectives the specific needs of the local community, the worth of which is not challenged here, can there be an over-all program of image construction in the United States for the junior college? The answer is far from clear but is probably in the affirmative. However, that program is outside the scope of this paper.

The "best" junior colleges probably suffer greatly from the reputations of the "worst" junior colleges. It is perfectly understandable that the administrator of the "better" junior college is disturbed by reputational influences he considers adverse emanating from the "inferior" junior college. Practically all administrators, as well as all other personnel associated with a school, want people to think well of that school. But cannot the so-called "inferior" junior college actually be facing and meeting the specific needs of a specific community during a specific period of time and doing the job well? Cannot the most important single dimension of reputation for the junior college be the *local* prestige accorded by the well-served community? This is not to deny another dimension, the prestige of the junior college as a *type* of educational institution. But all too often those involved in the emotional vortex of the junior college movement appear to the author to lose perspective.

There are several shortcomings to this study, the greatest of which is the fact that the sampling did not conform perfectly with scientific stan-

dards of randomness. Therefore, no tests of significance were calculated for the differences between the two groups. Another important limitation is that the same was rather small. And it was restricted to the seniors in only one field of study, business administration, and only one university. Also only ten adjectival pairs could not fully describe all aspects of a functioning educational institution.

Nevertheless, the results of the study do provide at least some fragmentary information on the perceived characteristics of the junior college as an institution and provide a basis for conjecture and further research. Although knowledge is desirable for its own sake, the research which the author hopes will be performed regarding this type of educational institution would include some with immediate application. That application would be in the perplexing problem of planning and organizing for the more effective education of a growing and school-conscious population.

Means and Standard Deviations of Views Of Business Administration Seniors Toward the Concept of "Junior College"*

	Mean		*Standard Deviation*	
Scale	Attended jr. college (n = 20)	Did not attend jr. college (n = 40)	Attended jr. college (n = 20)	Did not attend jr. college (n = 40)
Useful-useless	5.65	5.75	1.42	.93
Domineering-lax	3.25	3.43	1.33	.98
Motivated-aimless	5.00	4.78	1.12	1.05
Timely-untimely	4.95	4.80	1.76	1.26
Potent-impotent	5.00	4.83	1.21	1.22
Difficult-easy	3.00	3.38	1.59	1.33
Influential-uninfluential	4.35	4.60	1.72	1.13
Vigorous-feeble	4.05	4.40	1.82	.98
Moving-still	5.05	4.83	1.31	.98
Important-unimportant	5.80	5.55	1.24	1.10

*The seven space semantic differential technique of psychologist Charles Osgood was utilized. The left hand adjective in each pair was the "7" pole.

(1) See, for example, the following: Earl J. McGrath, "Does the Community College Have a Future?", *The Educational Forum*, November 1962, pp. 5-13; Kenneth Frasure, "Future of the Community College," *Education*, May 1964, pp. 555-556; and B. Lamar Johnson, "Needed: Experimental Junior Colleges," *Junior College Journal*, October 1965, pp. 17-20.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES
NOV 8 1967
CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION

Peabody Journal of Education

Published by
GEORGE PEABODY COLLEGE FOR TEACHERS
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

A. L. CRABB, Editor J. E. WINDROW, Managing Editor
DOROTHY C. CROWLEY, Executive Secretary

Editorial Advisory Board

John E. Brewton
Kenneth Cooper
J. Isaac Copeland
Robert Davis
Clifton Hall
W. C. Jones
Maycie Southall
W. D. McClurkin
Louis Nicholas
Roy Pangle
Craig Sipe
Lalla Walker
Theodore Woodward
David J. Mullen

The Peabody Journal of Education is published bi-monthly—in January, March, May, July, September, and November—at George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee 37203. Subscription rates: $3.50 per year in the United States and possessions, foreign, $3.70; single copies, 60 cents; less than half a year, single copy rate. Single copies will be supplied when available.

Entered at the post office at Nashville, Tennessee, as second-class mail matter. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized September 14, 1923.

Copyright 1966
by George Peabody College for Teachers

The Peabody Journal of Education is included in the Education Index and the Book Review Index.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY A. L. Crabb for Peabody Journal of Education TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."